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*English Wayfaring Life in the Middle Ages (XIV. Century).*

By J. J. JUSSERAND. Translated from the French by LUCY TOULMIN SMITH. New York and London, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1889. — 451 pp.

The first thing that strikes one about this book is its prettiness. Printer and publisher have done their best: type and paper are both worthy to accompany the admirably selected illustrations from manuscripts and photographs with which the volume is enriched. To those who know the work in its original French dress and yellow paper covers, the metamorphosis is astounding.

The next thing that occurs to us on turning over its pages is that it is an example of a kind of work, now for some reason or other rare in England, but not uncommon thirty or forty years ago. Perhaps the increasing accumulation of material of late years has deterred men from attempting that sort of popular or semi-popular description of the social life of the past based upon contemporary sources for which Knight's *Pictorial History* long served as a model. M. Jusserand differs from Knight's fellow-workers and imitators in having a wider range of learning, and a more vivacious style. Being a Frenchman, he dares not be dull. This is not an unmixed advantage. A desire to be sprightly leads him to occasionally introduce imaginative "purple patches," which are not particularly appropriate in the French, and are merely ludicrous in the English version; as for instance where, after describing the awkward carriages and bad roads of the fourteenth century, and remarking that a cavalier accompanying a lady in her chariot would have to speak somewhat loud, he winds up with these neat little sentences: "So trivial a necessity has always sufficed to break the charm of the most delicate thought; too many shocks agitate the flower, and when the knight presents it, it has already lost its perfumed pollen" (page 99).

M. Jusserand is excellent in details. Upon the subject he has chosen, the means of communication, and the various classes, — minstrels, messengers, merchants, outlaws, runaway peasants, wandering preachers and friars, pardoners and pilgrims, — that made use of them, he has brought together a considerable collection of interesting facts. But he is not so successful when he attempts to generalize, or to show the relation of the circumstances he describes to the problems of historical development. He thinks for instance that the number and importance of "wayfarers" was something peculiar to England. This, he tells us, explains why the peasant revolt of 1381 was more successful than the Jacquerie (page 272); why the people in England were then "united" enough "to snatch the necessary concessions at a fitting season," so that "a total overturn" such as the French revolution, was never needed (page 409). Now, of course, it is possible that wayfarers played a more important

part in England than in France. But it is not antecedently probable ; and M. Jusserand gives us absolutely no proof of his assertion. And indeed a mere glance into an ordinary text book, such as Rambaud's *Histoire de la civilisation française*, will probably convince most people that M. Jusserand has allowed a natural enthusiasm for his subject to run away with his judgment.

Then again, M. Jusserand is really too good a mediævalist to re-echo, as he does, the modern self-satisfied commonplaces about the arbitrariness and irrationality of all the legislation of the middle ages as to industry and commerce (see especially pages 235-241). The prohibition to export English money, for example, would be "noxious" enough *now* ; but it does not follow that it was altogether noxious at a time when any state which had a higher standard of honesty in the matter of currency than its neighbors had enormous difficulties in keeping its own respectable currency in circulation. No one can read through the statutes of Edward III relating to money without seeing that their object was not, like that of the later mercantilists, merely to bring together within England as large a quantity as possible of the precious metals, but to preserve an honest and trustworthy coinage sufficient for the needs of internal trade. M. Jusserand might also have noticed that it was at any rate the intention of the government that merchants about to travel abroad should obtain foreign money in return for their English coins at the tables of exchange set up at the various ports, and that similarly foreign merchants arriving in England should there change their foreign for English money. It is however unnecessary to discuss the question in this place : the student of economic history will remember that it has been already dealt with by Professor Ochenkowski.

The same narrowness of view is apparent in what our author tells us of foreign merchants in England. He gives the impression of an arbitrary government, that did not know its own mind, and "protected and impeded" trade by turn. No doubt the state of things was bad enough to modern eyes. But if M. Jusserand had shown us, as he might have done, the royal government struggling throughout the period to secure better terms for alien traders ; and if he had pointed out that even the restrictions imposed upon them by the town magistrates were part of the general guild system of the time, which had at any rate *some* good sides, the stupidity of our ancestors would hardly have seemed so dense as he would now lead us to fear.

In spite of these faults the book is a valuable contribution to our knowledge of the middle ages. It is to be hoped that if it reaches a second edition, the English version, which is on the whole very satisfactory, will be freed from some slight blemishes, in most cases un-English expressions due to literal translation.

W. J. ASHLEY.